

Watervliet Arsenal
Officer's Quarters
(Quarters 2)
Bricker Lane south of the intersection
of Bricker Lane and Stewart Road
Watervliet
Albany County
New York

HABS No. NY-5521E

HABS
NY,
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1/2 -

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WATERVLIET ARSENAL
OFFICER'S QUARTERS
(Quarters 2)

HABS No. NY-5521E

Location: Bricker Lane, south of the intersection of
Bricker Lane and Stewart Road,
Watervliet Arsenal,
Watervliet,
Albany County, New York.

USGS Troy South Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 18.605910.4730460

Present Owner: U.S. Army

Present Occupant: Lt. Col. and Mrs. R. C. Cheatham

Present Use: Family housing - officer

Significance: Erected in 1889, this building is one of two similar quarters built to house an increased officer staff necessitated by establishment of the Army's gun factory at Watervliet. Located in the housing area developed at the north side of the arsenal in the nineteenth century, it is a good example of a Queen Anne style residence. Among the building's residents were the family of Colonel James Walker Benet, which included the authors Stephen Vincent, William Rose, and Laura Benet.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: An appropriation of \$20,000 was made in 1888 for the construction of two officer's quarters. The construction contract was awarded in May 1889, and the building was completed in December (Report of the Secretary of War, 1890, p. 141).
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Army
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The builder was Edward Kelly of Troy, New York (Report of the Secretary of War, 1890, p. 142).

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According to the specifications published in the 1889 Report of the Secretary of War (p. 286), the foundation walls were to be built of stone originally used in the construction of the Arsenal building adjacent to the commandant's quarters. Since the Arsenal building was demolished in 1889, the stone may have been reused for the foundation of the quarters.

5. Original plans and construction: In April 1888 the arsenal's commander, Col. J. M. Whittemore, submitted plans to the Ordnance Department for two sets of officer's quarters based on plans for quarters that were to be built at Fort Riley, Kansas (Kyle, p. 376). Since these drawings were not located, it is uncertain whether they also provided the basis for the Watervliet quarters.

The specifications and a drawing for the principal elevation were published in the Report of the Secretary of War for 1889 (Appendix 22, pp. 286-293 and Plate IV). A set of six drawings, including side elevations and floor plans, is on file at the arsenal's Engineering Division. Although undated, they may be the preconstruction drawings, since they illustrate a slightly larger house with more terra cotta string course detailing (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-7 through HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-12). The Report of the Secretary of War for 1890 (p. 141) notes that the house was diminished in size, and some detailing and plumbing deleted to reduce construction costs.

6. Alterations and additions: Few alterations have been made to the house since its construction. A one-story porch was erected across the rear (southwest) elevation in 1906 and the attic story was finished to provide servants' quarters in 1919. A fire escape ladder and platform were added on the southeast side in 1958. Plans documenting these alterations are in the Engineering Division.

B. Historical Context:

In 1887 Watervliet Arsenal was designated the Army's gun factory, setting off a building program which lasted into the mid-1890s. Two sets of officer's quarters (Quarters 2 and 3, HABS No. NY-5521F) were among the earliest structures erected under this program. Completed in 1889, the two are located in the residential area developed during the nineteenth century to house the arsenal's highest ranking officers. Colonel James Walker Benet and his family resided in the house about 1904 while he was stationed at the arsenal to supervise construction of field guns. Benet's children were the authors William Rose, Stephen Vincent, and Laura. William Rose Benet's first poem was published during the family's residence in the house (Quarters

One, A Place in History). Benet returned to the arsenal to serve as commandant from 1919 to 1921. The building is still used as officer's family housing. (For further documentation see HAER No. NY-1A.)

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This two-and-one-half story house exhibits the picturesque massing and varied use of materials characteristic of the Queen Anne style. Its exuberance contrasts with the more restrained character of the earlier nineteenth-century quarters in the housing area at the north side of the arsenal.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in good condition and is well maintained.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The irregularly-shaped building measures approximately 46' 2" (northeast) x 68' 10" with bays on the northwest, northeast, and southeast sides. A porch wraps around the northeast and northwest sides, and smaller porches are located on the southeast and southwest sides. The house is two-and-one-half stories with a full basement and attic. The bay at the north end of the southeast side is one-story. Remaining bays are two-and-one-half stories.
2. Foundations: Foundations are random coursed limestone with a beveled stone water table that is painted gray.
3. Walls: Walls are brick laid in 7/1 common bond painted gray. Narrow molded brick string courses almost completely encircle the house at sill level on the first and second stories and at lintel level across the front and northwest bay. An ornamental terra cotta panel with a floral design is set below corbelled courses in a false window opening on the second floor of the northeast side. Gable ends of the bays are covered with scalloped wood shingles.
4. Structural system, framing: Walls are load bearing, 20" thick in the basement and 12" thick on the first and second floors. The roof is supported by timber trusses.

5. Porches: A one-story screened porch wraps around the northeast and northwest sides of the house. Seven tapered wood Ionic columns set on wood bases support a decorated frieze and flat roof. The balustrades have square balusters, and the newel posts at the base of the wood steps are squared. A segmental pediment sits above the entrance on the northeast side. The porch deck and ceiling are wood.

A one-story screened porch set on brick piers extends across the rear elevation. Six square posts support the shed roof. A plain balustrade with square balusters encircles the porch. A triangular wood pediment marks the entrance at the center of the porch. The steps have a plain wood rail. The deck and ceiling are wood.

A small, open, entrance porch is located on the southeast side. A single square post and four scrolled brackets support the shed roof. The balusters and newel posts are square. The steps and deck are wood.

6. Chimneys: Interior chimneys rise from the ridge at the front of the house, from south of the juncture of the bay on the northwest side, and from the bay on the southeast side. A fourth chimney rises from just above the water table to cut through the cornice on the northwest side. All are brick with beaded corners, stone banding, and corbelled brick caps.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the northeast consists of double-leaf, wood doors with raised panels and large single lights. The three doors on the southwest and southeast sides are paneled wood with two-light transoms.
- b. Windows: Typical windows at the front of the house are one-over-one-light, double-hung wood sash arranged singly or in pairs. At the rear, windows are two-over-two-light, double-hung wood sash. Sills are rock faced stone. Lintels are either stone or brick segmental arches or stone flat arches. First story windows on the front elevation east of the porch and those on the northwest face of the bay on the northwest side have rock faced quoin surrounds. Windows in the gable ends of the bays are paired fifteen-over-one-light, double-hung wood sash with paneled pilasters, a decorated frieze, and molded wood cornice. Dormers have multilight sash.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof over the front of the house is a steep hip intersected by a gable on the northeast. At the rear, the roof is a truncated hip intersected by gables on the northwest and southeast. All are covered with asphalt shingles, and flashings are copper.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The molded boxed cornice is bracketed and has a plain wood frieze. The corners of the gable over the polygonal bay on the northwest side are supported by large wood brackets.
- c. Dormers: Shed dormers with molded cornices punctuate the northwest and northeast sides of the steep hip roof at the front of the house and the southeast, southwest, and northwest sides of the truncated hip roof at the rear of the house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement consists of three interconnecting rooms on the west and one large and two small rooms on the east. The stairs from the first floor open into the room in the southeast corner.
- b. First floor: The main entrance on the northeast opens onto a large stair hall with stairs in the northwest corner. South of the stair hall is the dining room and a narrow hall leading to the kitchen in the southwest corner. A pantry is between the dining room and kitchen. To the east of the stair hall is the living room, then the library, the vestibule at the southeast door, a powder room and the service stairs. A laundry room and pantry are in the southeast corner. (See supplemental material, floor plan)
- c. Second floor: The main stairs lead to an L-shaped hall off which five bedrooms and three bathrooms open. (See supplement material, floor plan)
- d. Attic: The attic is accessible only by the service stairs at the rear of the house. The stairs lead to a central hall off which four rooms and a bathroom open. A small room is located in the southeast corner. (See supplemental material, floor plan)

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2. Stairways: The main stairway in the northwest corner is open, two flights with a landing. The heavy newel and rail are stained; the turned balusters arranged two to a tread, the treads, and risers are painted. The service stairs at the rear of the house are enclosed, straight-run with a plain wood rail.
3. Flooring: Basement floors are concrete. Floors in the first story halls, dining room, living room, and library are varnished, narrow-width boards. Remaining floors in the first and second story rooms are linoleum. Attic floors are wide-width boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Exterior basement walls are stone, and interior walls are brick. Walls in the living room, library, dining room, halls, and bedrooms are papered. Pantry, kitchen, and vestibule walls are plaster. Bathroom and laundry room walls have a ceramic tile wainscot. Attic walls are either dry wall or beaded, vertical, wood paneling.

All ceilings in the first floor rooms are painted pressed metal. In the stair hall, 15 plain panels with a border of shells and leaves are surrounded by plain picture frame moldings. The squares, separated by a beaded line are outlined by a prominent decorated picture frame molding with guilloche and bead and reel designs. A wide band containing stylized floral motifs outlined with curvilinear forms frames the whole.

In the dining room, nearly the entire ceiling is covered with a series of interlocking squares with raised borders (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-3). Stylized flowers occupy the small squares between the larger squares. A pronounced bead and reel border and wide foliated band frame the squares. The coved cornice bears a leafy design.

On the living room ceiling, large squares are formed by four smaller squares. At the center of the large square, is a flower-like motif. Curvilinear forms and raised beads cover much of the rest of the large square and join with identical designs on adjacent squares. A concave picture frame molding surrounds the whole. A cartouche-like design is centered on each side of the frame and blocks containing shells are placed at each corner. The whole is bordered by a series of small squares crossed by raised diagonal lines and raised cross-shaped forms at the centers and corners of each square. The border is surrounded by a molded frame and coved cornices bearing a swirled leafy design. The dining room ceiling is similar.

Ceilings in the remainder of the first floor and those in all rooms on the second floor except the bathroom adjacent to the

attic stairs are painted pressed metal of less elaborate designs. The bathroom ceiling is accoustical tile.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Typical doors on the first and second story are five-panel wood set in surrounds of molded trim with corner blocks. Between the library and living room, the stair hall and dining room, and the stair hall and living room, are double, sliding, five-panel doors with molded trim and corner blocks.

b. Windows: Windows are set above wood panels and are framed by molded trim with corner blocks.

6. Decorative features and trim: Set diagonally across the southeast corner of the living room, the rectangular opening of the fireplace is framed by a glazed tile surround, round columns with foliated capitals, a frieze decorated with a featherlike design, and a plain mantel shelf. The mantel is wood painted white, and the hearth is glazed tile.

In the library, the opening of the fireplace is rectangular and is framed by a ceramic tile surround (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-4). A round arch spanning the mantel and containing a grid of raised blocks surrounds the opening. The mantel shelf with a back is supported by brackets. Rows of small raised blocks decorate the corners below the shelf as well as the top edge of the shelf back. The mantel is wood painted white, and the hearth is glazed tile. The fireplace is set diagonally across the northeast corner of the room.

The rectangular opening of the fireplace in the dining room is framed by a glazed tile surround, thin fluted columns which sprout bunches of leaves from their capitals, a plain frieze, and a molded mantel shelf (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-3). The mantel is wood painted white, and the hearth is stone with a tile border. The fireplace is set against the chimney breast on the southwest wall of the room.

The stair hall fireplace is set against the chimney breast on the southwest wall. Its rectangular opening is surmounted by a painted paneled wood frieze and simple mantel shelf. The glazed tile hearth has a geometric border.

In the bedroom at the center of the northeast side, the rectangular opening of the fireplace is framed by paneled pilasters, a frieze ornamented with raised vertical and

horizontal panels, and a plain mantel shelf. The surround is wood painted white, and the hearth is glazed tile with a geometric border. The fireplace is set diagonally across the northeast corner of the room.

The fireplace on the southwest wall of the bedroom on the opposite side of the hall has wood pilasters below a plain mantel shelf. A narrow scalloped border runs below the shelf.

The southwest wall of the pantry between the dining room and kitchen is lined with glass front cabinets.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating, air conditioning: Heated air is pumped from the furnace in the basement through metal floor grates. The house is cooled by central air conditioning.
- b. Lighting: Lighting is provided by modern incandescent ceiling fixtures.
- c. Plumbing: Plumbing fixtures are modern.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces northeast onto Bricker Lane east of Stewart Road. It is surrounded by spacious lawns, curved tree-lined drives, and four additional family quarters. The arsenal's built-up industrial, maintenance, and administrative areas are located to the south and west.
2. Outbuildings: A one-story, brick, gable-roofed garage constructed in 1959 (Building 46) is located southwest of the house.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

Officers Quarters, no date. Six sheets including north and south elevations and cellar, first, second, and attic floor plans. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-7 through HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-12) Probably preconstruction drawings since the house is shown larger than it was actually constructed.

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Front Elevation. Published in U.S. Congress, House. Report of the Secretary of War. Vol. 2720, 1889. Appendix 22, Plate IV. Accompanied specifications for construction of the building.

Porch for Rear of Quarters No. 2. April 16, 1906. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Quarters 2 as Present. March 22, 1913. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. Contains floor plans of the house.

Alterations to Attic Floor of Quarters No. 2 and Quarters No. 3. May 15, 1919. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division. Inclusion of servants' quarters in the attic.

First and Second Floor Plans. January 12, 1944. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Fire Escape Ladder and Platform for Quarters 2 and 3. October 1958. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

B. Early Views:

Northeast (front) and northwest elevations. Probably taken during the 1930s. Watervliet Arsenal Museum. (HABS Photo No. NY-5521E-6)

D. Bibliography:

Secondary and published sources:

Building Technology, Inc. Historic Properties Report Watervliet Arsenal, Watervliet, New York and Rotterdam Family Housing Area, Rotterdam, New York. January 1985. The report and inventory cards for the arsenal are filed as field records in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress under HAER No. NY-1A.

Kyle, Francis K. A History of Watervliet Arsenal. Watervliet, New York: Watervliet Arsenal, 1920. Quotes contemporary correspondence on plans and construction. Copy available in Watervliet Arsenal Museum.

U.S. Congress. House. Report of the Secretary of War. Vol. 2720, 1889. Contains specifications for construction of Quarters 2 and 3.

U.S. Congress. House. Report of the Secretary of War. Vol. 2836, 1890. Contains information on progress of construction and contractor.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Records of the Office of the Chief of Ordnance, Record Group 156, and Records of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Record Group 77, Navy and Old Army Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. should be further investigated.

F. Supplemental Material:

First, Second, and Attic Floor Plans, Officers Quarters, Building No. 2. No date. Three sheets. Watervliet Arsenal Engineering Division.

Prepared by: Barbara E. Hightower
Historian
MacDonald and Mack Partnership
February 1985

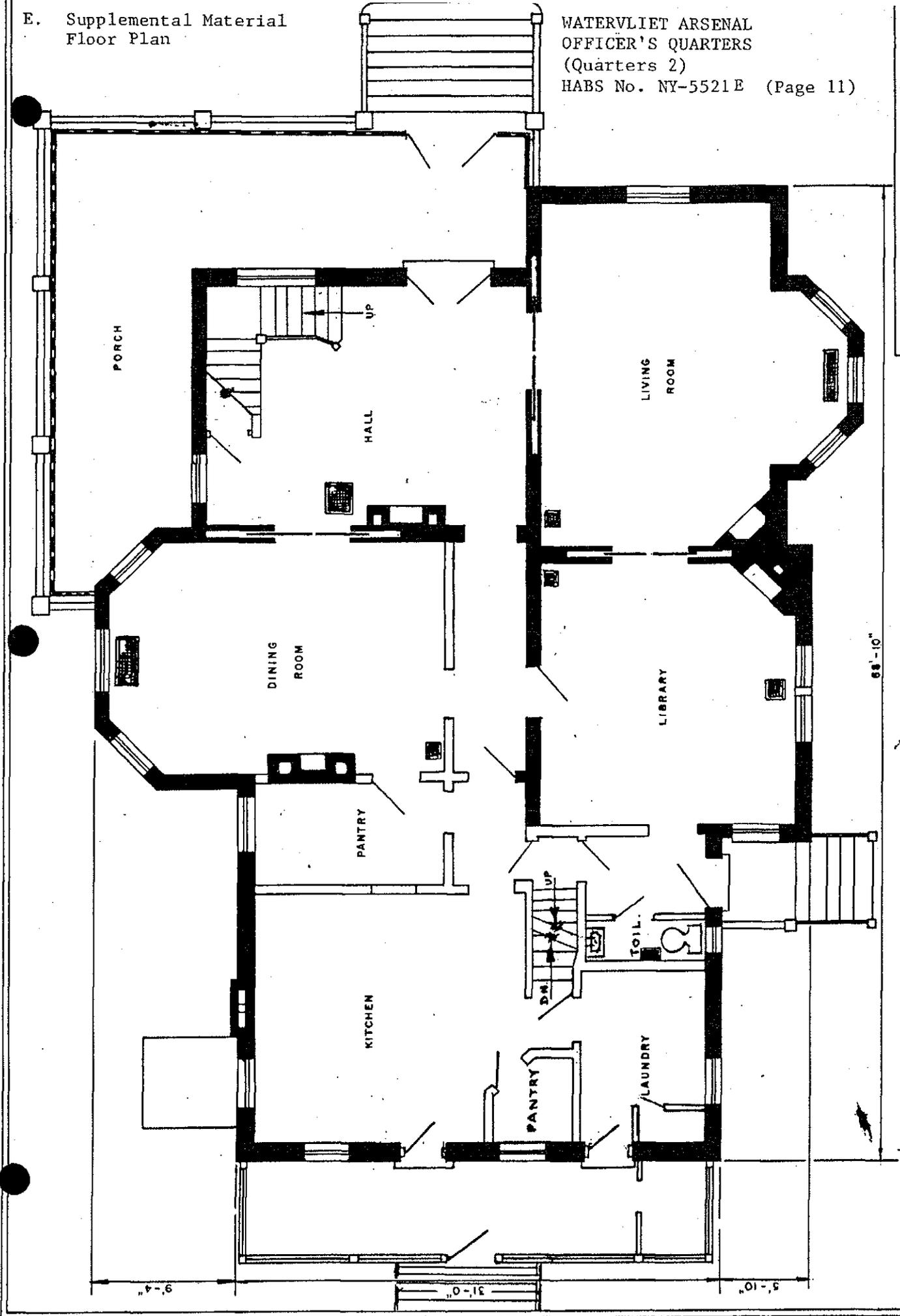
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was part of a program initiated through a memorandum of agreement between the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of the Army. Stanley H. Fried, Chief, Real Estate Branch of Headquarters DARCOM, and Dr. Robert J. Kapsch, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, were program directors. Sally Kress Tompkins of HABS/HAER was program manager, and Robie S. Lange of HABS/HAER was project manager. Under the direction of William A. Brenner, Building Technology Incorporated, Silver Spring, Maryland, acted as primary contractor, and MacDonald and Mack Partnership, Minneapolis, was a major subcontractor. The project included a survey of historic properties at Watervliet Arsenal, as well as preparation of an historic properties report and HABS/HAER documentation for 17 buildings. The survey, report, and documentation were completed by Barbara E. Hightower, historian, Minneapolis. The photographs were taken by Robert A. Ryan and J Ceronie of Dennett, Muessig, Ryan, and Associates, Ltd., Iowa City, Iowa. Drawings were produced by Gary M. Louris, Minneapolis.

WATERVLIET ARSENAL
WATERVLIET, N.Y.

Drawn by: J.R. GANGE, A.E. App'd by: [Signature]
REVISIONS: D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
OFFICERS' QUARTERS
BUILDING NO. 2

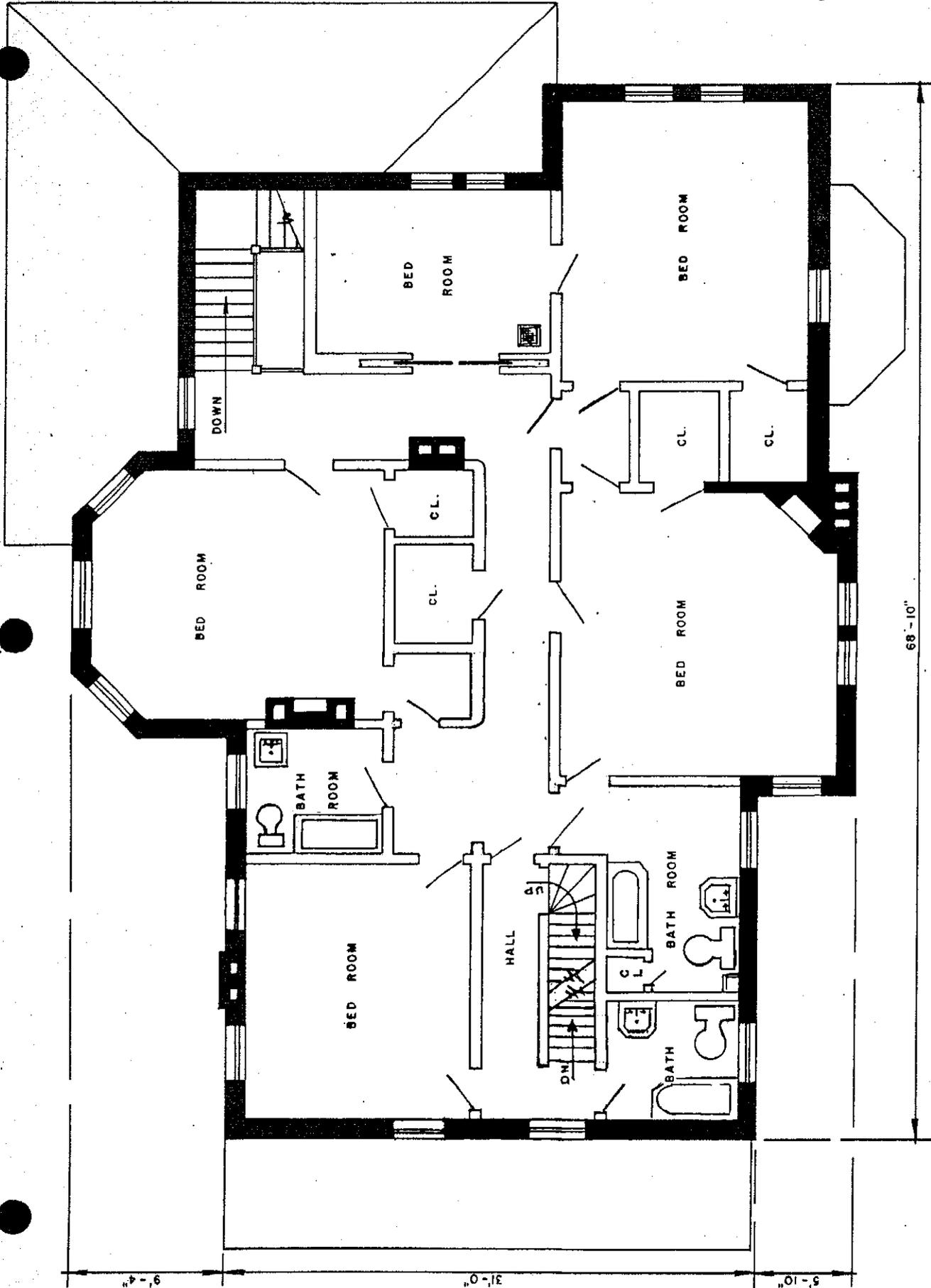


NET FLOOR AREA
3,200
Square Feet
TOTAL
FLOOR CAPACITY

E. Supplemental Material
Floor Plan

WATERVLLET ARSENAL
OFFICER'S QUARTERS
(Quarters 2)

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WATERVLLET ARSENAL
WATERVLLET, NY

Drawn by: J.R.GANGEMI, A.E. App'd by: *J.R. Gangemi* Date: 7/50

Revisions: *FL*

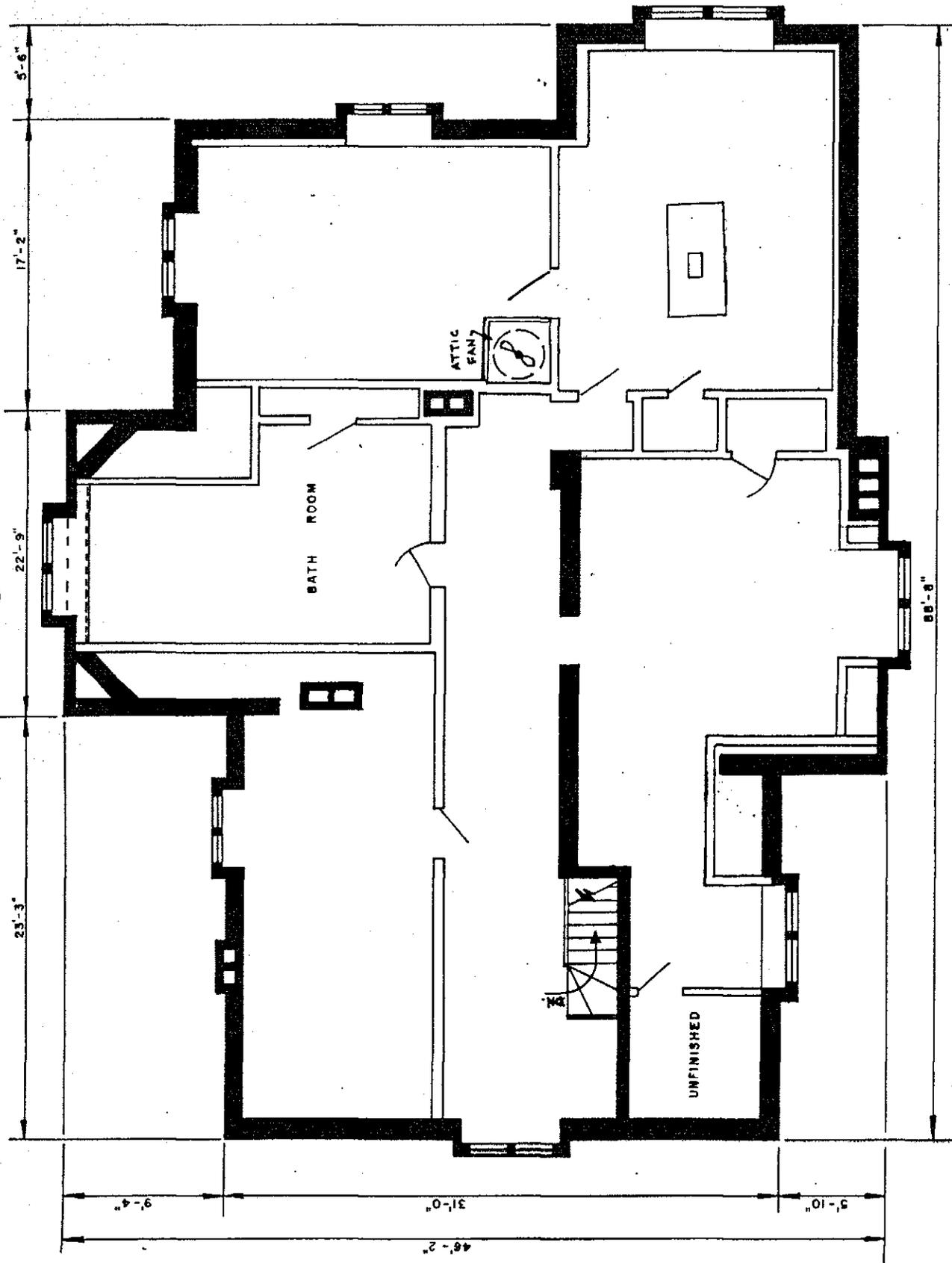
**SECOND FLOOR PLAN
OFFICERS QUARTERS
BUILDING NO. 2**

Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0" Date:

NET FLOOR AREA	Square feet
FLOOR CAPACITY	Per square foot
	9'-10" CLG. HT.

E. Supplemental Material
Floor Plan

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(Quarters 2)
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WATERVLIET ARSENAL	
WATERVLIET, N.Y.	
Drawn by: J.R.GANGEMI, A.E.	App'd by: [Signature]
Revisions: 1-1	Date: 1/30
ATTIC FLOOR PLAN OFFICERS QUARTERS BUILDING NO. 2	
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0" Date:	



NET FLOOR AREA
Square feet
FLOOR CAPACITY
30 LBS
Per square foot